

THE JAPANESE FLORAL CALENDAR.

BY ERNEST W. CLEMENT, M. A.

XII. THE CAMELLIA.

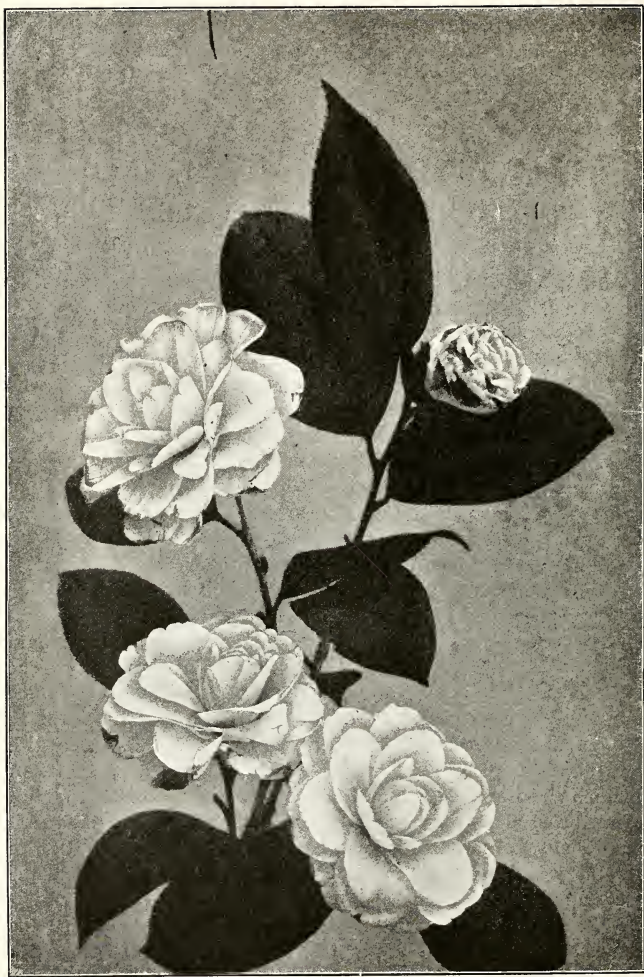
WE have selected for this month a flower of which there are two principal varieties, called in Japanese *sazankwa* and *tsubaki*. The Chinese ideograms used for the latter are the same as the first two ideograms of the former, and mean "mountain-tea," so that *sazankwa* means etymologically "wild tea flower." The tea-plant is scientifically classed as *camellia theifera*. The *tsubaki* does not generally bloom till January, but the *sazankwa* blossoms come in December.

Mr. Conder states the following about this flower: "There is a prejudice against the camellia on account of the fragility of the flower, which falls to pieces at the slightest touch; it is nevertheless much esteemed as being an evergreen." The famous Ogasawara mentions the following reasons for the high estimation in which the camellia should be held. It is recorded that, in the time of the gods, Sasanō no Mikoto and his spouse Inada Hime built a palace and as a token of unchanging fidelity for eight thousand years planted a camellia tree. This tree is said still to exist in the province of Idzumo and is called *Yachi yo no tsubaki*, or "the camellia tree of eight thousand years." Another reason assigned for the high estimation in which the tree is held is that the pestle in which the rice for the wedding-cake is ground is made of its wood. From the seeds a fine hair oil is made.

In the art of floral decoration, it is proper to combine the camellia with the narcissus; and the red kind ranks first.

The camellia, on account of its fragility, should not be used at weddings, but is appropriate for funerals.

The camellia is not a favorite subject in art or literature; therefore, we present this time no poem.



CAMELLIA BLOSSOMS.

CONCLUSION.

It ought to be evident, by this time, that the Japanese take a most thorough delight in their floral kingdom. Fully as much as in hero-worship do they indulge in "flower-worship." They truly worship nature in all her varied forms and hold communion with all her aspects. The Japanese love a flower *as a flower*.

"A primrose by the river's brim,
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

But, to a Japanese, simply as "nothing more" than a real flower, it would be full of beauty. The Japanese certainly find delight in even the simplest forms of natural beauty.

The subject of Japanese floriculture is extensive and exhausting. Japan is composed of gardens, "from the least to the greatest" in size; it is, in fact, itself an immense garden, a huge park, and a miniature paradise. Gardens, not only public but also private, abound. Even the poorest and humblest house is not without its little oasis of natural beauty, if it be no more than a single plant and blossom, or even only a twig. For the Japanese word *hana*, as we have said, is quite comprehensive in its meaning, and includes not only blossoms, but also stems and branches, and even stumps of blossomless trees and shrubs. A Japanese garden, therefore, may not contain a single blossom or scarcely a sprig of green. Some have nothing green at all, and consist entirely of rocks, and pebbles, and sand.

One such large garden had been designed with the distinct purpose of conveying the impression of "approaching the sea over a verge of dunes." The Japanese are the people who truly and keenly find "sermons in stones, books, in the running brooks, and good in everything."

The principal purpose, in fact, for a garden in Japan is realistic, naturalistic; it aims to imitate, and does not improve, actual landscapes. "It is, therefore, at once a picture and a poem; perhaps even more a poem than a picture." Sometimes, also, sermons may be attempted and abstract moral ideas, such as charity, faith, piety, content, calm, and connubial bliss, may be expressed in the beauties of nature.

Japan is a land of flowers, "a veritable garden of flowers"; but it maintains a nobility in floral as well as social institutions. There

are about a dozen *hana* which are reckoned among first-class; and even among these feudal lords there are gradations. Each has also its special meaning and use. The twelve *majores dii* of the Japanese



CAMELLIA JAPONICA.

floral kingdom are the cherry, chrysanthemum, cypress, bamboo, lotus, maple, rhodea, narcissus, peony, pine, plum, and wistaria.*

*Those who are especially interested in the subject of floral Japan should consult Piggott's *Garden of Japan* and Conder's *Theory of Flower Arrangement and Art of Landscape Gardening in Japan*, to which we have made frequent references.

The art of flower arrangement in Japan is a great accomplishment, and the theory of it is quite complex. The basal idea is simple, for the Japanese do not believe in such a massing of various colors and of different flowers, branches, grasses, etc., as is needed



CAMELLIA JAPONICA (EIGHT-FOLD)

to delight our artistic senses. One who has succeeded in developing within him the Japanese esthetic ideas cannot help feeling that what is called here a "bouquet" is generally "a vulgar murdering of flowers, an outrage upon the color-sense, a brutality, an abomina-

tion." The most artistic American could scarcely appreciate, as much as even the lowest Japanese, the beauty of a solitary spray of blossoms or even of a solitary branch or twig without a single blossom.

The whole theory of Japanese flower arrangement depends

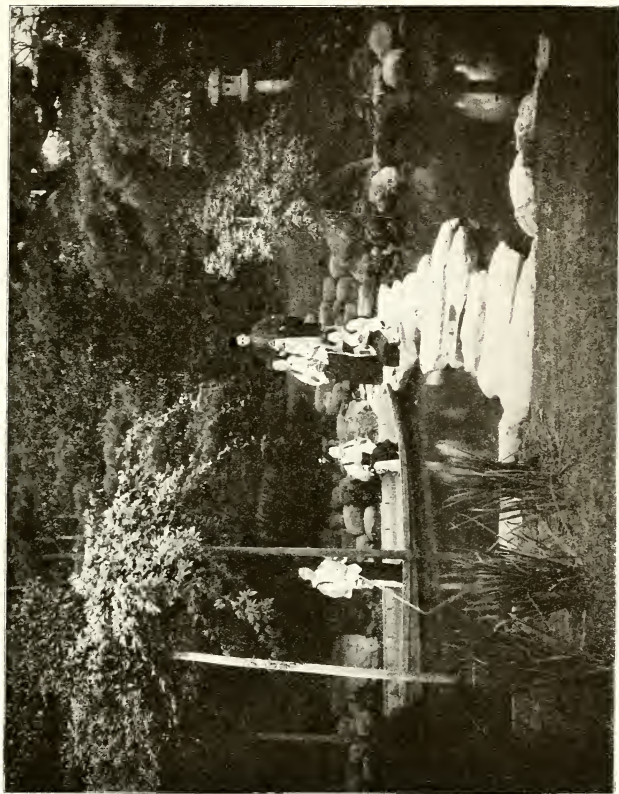


NANTEN (*NANDINA DOMESTICA*).

This plant is frequently used in winter for flower arrangement, when there are scarcely any *hanas* available.

upon the "language of line" rather than upon mass or color. Upon this simple base a rigid and complex system has been established, which has been carefully and thoroughly studied and analysed by a foreign architect, an Englishman, in the employ of the Japanese

Government. It will serve to give some idea of the magnitude and complexity of the subject to state that Mr. Conder's explanation thereof covers a hundred pages of the *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*.* He has discussed and illustrated by numerous



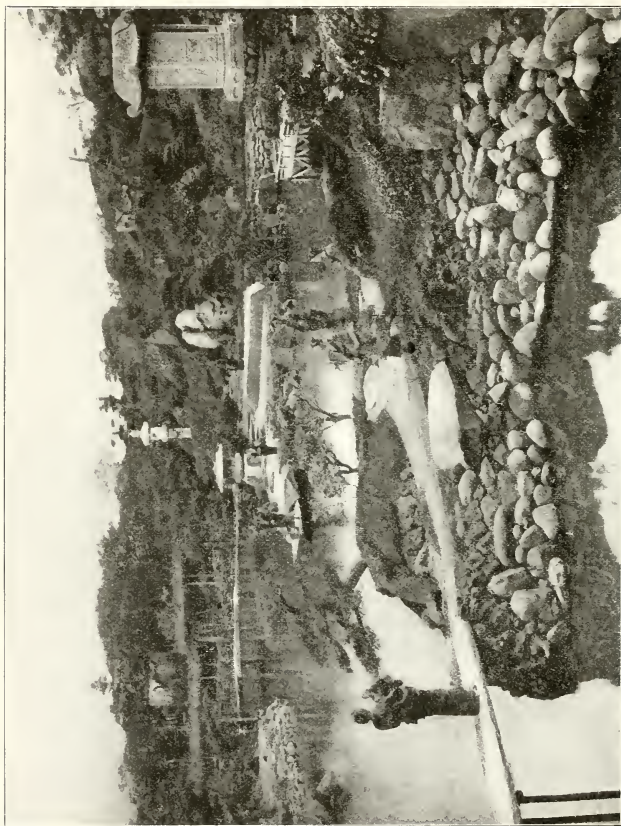
THE GARDEN OF AN ARISTOCRATIC JAPANESE FAMILY.

drawings the proper and improper combinations, the language of flowers, and other interesting matters.

This art of arranging flowers was considered by the Japanese

* He has also expanded this into an elegant book called *The Floral Art of Japan*.

as an "elegant accomplishment," and was an important item in the education of women of rank. But it appertained also to men of rank and of culture who might have retired from active life to the leisure of literary and esthetic pursuits. It has been stated that



A PRIVATE GARDEN.

those who engaged in this "fine art" would possess the following ten virtues:

"The privilege of associating with superiors; ease and dignity before men of rank; a serene disposition and forgetfulness of cares;

amusement in solitude; familiarity with the nature of plants and trees; the respect of mankind; constant gentleness of character; healthiness of mind and body; a religious spirit; self-abnegation and restraint."

In this monthly calendar of Floral Japan, we have not attempted to include all the flowers as in a botanical catalogue; we have merely made a selection of certain typical *hana*, to represent the floral year. But we must surely make at least mention of the fête-days (*en-nichi*), which are really flower-fairs, held once, twice, or thrice a month, according to circumstances, chiefly in the evening. The roadways are lined with flower-sellers and dealers in various other articles, which are displayed either on mats, or on carts, or in booths hastily constructed. On these occasions it is possible, after parleying with the seller,* to buy flowers for a very reasonable sum.

And now we may be able to appreciate how much the floral kingdom of Japan means to the Japanese. Huish has well expressed it as follows: "Flowers are associated with every act of a Japanese's life: they herald his birth, they are his daily companions, they accompany him to the grave; and after that they serve as a link between him and those he has left,—for his relatives and friends do not rest satisfied with piling up his coffin with floral tributes, they show their remembrance by offerings for long years afterwards."†

* The first price is exorbitant and proverbial: "Charge like a florist at a festival."

† In the very interesting chapter on "Flora and Flower Festivals" in his book entitled *Japan and its Art*."